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Message Text

SECRET

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ACTION SS-25

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S E C R E T SEOUL 5726

EXDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PFOR KS US
SUBJECT: MEETING WITH PRESIDENT PARK

1. SUMMARY: I PAID FINAL CALL ON PRESIDENT PARK JULY 24 PRIOR TO DEPARTURE FOR US, ACCOMPANIED BY DCM. IN AN HOUR-LONG DISCUSSION, PRESIDENT PARK DISCUSSED UN KOREAN PROBLEM, AMERICAN POLITICAL SCENE AND HIS OBJECTIONS TO LINKING KOREAN AND JAPANESE SECURITY. END SUMMARY.

2. DISCUSSION OPENED WITH PARK PRAISING REFERENCES TO KOREA IN SECRETARY'S SPEECH OF JULY 22, NOTING THAT IT HAD BEEN RECEIVED IN KOREA WITH WARMTH AND APPRECIATION. I GAVE HIM FULL TEXT WHICH HE HAD NOT YET RECEIVED.

3. PARK AGREED WITH MY OBSERVATION THAT OUR UN EFFORTS WERE FAR MORE EXTENSIVE AND MARKED BY OUTSTANDING COORDINATION BETWEEN ROK AND US. HE NOTED THAT HIS GOVERNMENT HAD BEGUN WITH A "NO-CONFRONTATION" STRATEGY, BUT IS NOW CONVINCED THAT IF NORTH KOREA INSISTS ON CONFRONTATION, IT MUST BE COUNTERED IN THE "MOST EFFECTIVE WAY".

4. THE CONVERSATION THEN TURNED TO THE AMERICAN POLITICAL SCENE, WITH THE PRESIDENT INDICATING GREAT INTEREST IN THE DIFFERENCES BETWEEN THE REPUBLICANS AND THE DEMOCRATS ON THE QUESTION OF ASIA AND KOREA SPECIFICALLY. THE AMBASSADOR NOTED THAT IT APPEARED DIFFERENCES ARE NOT SUBSTANTIAL, WITH A CARTER ADMINISTRATION PRESSING MORE ON POSSIBLE WITHDRAWAL OF GROUND FORCES
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FROM SOUTH KOREA AND STATING FORCEFULLY ITS POSITION ON HUMAN

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RIGHTS VIOLATIONS.

5. THE PRESIDENT NOTED THAT THERE HAD BEEN APPARENTLY A SUBTLE SHIFT IN AMERICAN DISCUSSIONS OF THE KOREA SECURITY ISSUE. WHEREAS KOREA'S SECURITY HAD BEEN MENTIONED BOTH IN TERMS OF BROADER US SECURITY INTERESTS IN ASIA AND THE US PRESENCE IN ASIA AND THEREFORE LINKED TO US SECURITY THROUGH THAT PRESENCE, NOW THE ARGUMENTATION FOR THE NECESSITY TO INSURE THE SECURITY OF SOUTH KOREA SEEMED TO REST ON ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE SECURITY OF JAPAN. HE DIFFERENTIATED THE FORD ADMINISTATION WHICH TOOK FORMER STAND AND CONGRESSIONAL AND ACADEMIC CIRCLES WHICH TOOK LATTER POSITION. BASIC RATIONALE FOR LATTER POSITION SEEMED NOW TO BE THAT JAPAN'S SECURITY WAS VITAL TO THE US AND THAT KOREA'S SECURITY WAS VITAL TO JAPAN'S; THEREFORE KOREA'S SECURITY WAS VITAL TO US. THE PRESIDENT WONDERED WHETHER THERE WAS A NUANCE THAT MADE THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THESE TWO ARGUMENTATIONS IMPORTANT. HE ALSO WONDERED WHAT THE PROPONENTS OF THE KOREA-JAPAN-US LINKAGE WOULD SAY ABOUT KOREA'S SECURITY IF THERE WERE TO BE A RIFT IN US-JAPAN RELATIONS OR IF JAPAN WERE TO BECOME SELF-SUFFICIENT IN MILITARY TERMS.

6. THE PRESIDENT NOTED A COUPLE OF TIMES THAT WHILE LINKAGE OF KOREA'S SECURITY TO JAPAN'S WAS NOT OFFICIAL US GOVERNMENT POLICY, WAS STILL CONCERNED. HE AGREED WITH AMBASSADOR THAT THERE WERE MANY FACTORS THAT TIED US AND KOREA AND HE INDICATED THAT HE WAS AWARE OF THE STRENGTH OF THOSE TIES, BUT RETURNED AGAIN TO HIS CONCERN FOR POSSIBLE MISUNDERSTANDINGS ARISING AMONG KOREAN PEOPLE AND PARTICULAR "INTELLECTUALS" AND POSSIBLY IN JAPAN IF THESE GROUPS WERE TO BELIEVE THAT KOREA'S SECURITY WERE ONLY IMPORTANT TO THE US BECAUSE IT WAS VITAL TO JAPAN'S SECURITY. KOREANS SHOULD NOT COME TO FEEL THAT THEIR SECURITY WAS SUBORDINATED TO THAT OF JAPAN, A POINT HE MADE SEVERAL TIMES.

7. WHEN INVITED BY THE AMBASSADOR TO MENTION ANY ISSUES THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO HAVE RAISED IN WASHINGTON, HE STATED THAT THERE WERE NO SPECIAL MATTERS THAT OCCURRED TO HIM.

8. COMMENT: PRESIDENT PARK LOOKED TIRED AND IN NEED OF WORK-VACATION HE IS SOON TO TAKE. NEVERTHELESS, HE WAS RELATIVELY RELAXED AND APPEARED QUITE SATISFIED WITH COURSE OF DEVELOPMENTS
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IN KOREA. WHILE GIVING NO OUTWARD SIGN OF CONCERN ABOUT POSSIBLE DEMOCRATIC VICTORY IN ELECTIONS, HE CONTINUED TO PROBE ABOUT CARTER POSITION AS HE HAS DONE IN MOST RECENT CONVERSATIONS WITH MYSELF AND OTHER AMERICANS.
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